

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 MOSCOW 0866

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EEWT, ENRG, EFIN, COMECON, UR, US

SUBJECT: CODEL STEVENSON - DISCUSSION WITH USSR STATE BANK

CHAIRMAN ALKHIMOV

SUMMARY: SENATOR STEVENSON HAD WIDE RANGING AND SOMETIMES
VIGOROUSLY DEBATED DISCUSSION OF DEBTS, CREDITS AND FINANCING
WITH VLADIMIR ALKHIMOV, DIRECTOR OF THE STATE BANK (GOSBANK),
FOLLOWED BY A LUNCHEON CONVERSATION WITH ALKHIMOV. IN THE
DIALOGUE ALKHIMOV DISMISSED ANY CONCERN ABOUT SOVIET DEBT,
SUGGESTING US OUGHT TO BE MORE WORRIED ABOUT ITS OWN DEFICIT AND
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DEPRECIATION OF THE DOLLAR. HE ASSERTED- PERHAPS DISINGENUOUSLY -
THAT POLISH MEMBERSHIP IN INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (IMF) WAS
UP TO WARSAW, BUT FAVORABLY CONTRASTED CZECH FINANCIAL
CAUTION TO LESS PRUDENT POLICIES OF OTHER EAST EUROPEAN
STATES. POLES OVERBORROWED, HE SAID, BUT ARE NOW DOING
BETTER. WHILE ARGUING THAT SOVIETS HAVE NO OIL PROBLEM,
ALKHIMOV SUGGESTED THAT EAST EUROPEANS USE TOO MUCH ENERGY

AND EVEN SELL SOVIET OIL TO THE WEST. EAST EUROPEANS ARE "BIG DEBTORS" TO USSR BUT MAY BE ABLE TO ACHIEVE BETTER BALANCE IN 1981-85 PERIOD BY INCREASING EXPORTS TO THE USSR. HE STATED THAT USSR KEEPS MOST FOREIGN CURRENCY HOLDINGS IN DEUTSCHMARKS (LOCAL AMERICAN BANKERS FEEL THAT MOST SOVIET HOLDINGS ARE IN DOLLARS) BUT IS CONCERNED ABOUT PLIGHT OF DOLLAR. HE DOUBTED US CURRENCY DEPRECIATION WOULD PROVIDE MUCH BOOST TO US EXPORTS, SINCE SOVIET PURCHASING TENDENCIES DO NOT CHANGE QUICKLY. ALKHIMOV STRESSED NEED FOR USG ASSURANCES ON YAKUTSK PROJECT BUT STOPPED SHORT OF INSISTING THAT EXPORT-IMPORT BANK FINANCING WAS A NECESSARY CONDITION. ALKHIMOV CLAIMED SOVIETS ARE ALREADY EARNING ONE BILLION DOLLARS ANNUALLY FROM NATURAL GAS EXPORTS AND SAID ORENBURG WOULD BE COMPLETED ON SCHEDULE. HE MENTIONED INTERNAL DEBATE ON PRICE OF HEATING GAS AND SAID THAT SUBSIDIZED LOW PRICE OF BASIC COMMODITIES LIKE BREAD LEADS TO WASTE. ALKHIMOV WAS PREDICTABLY CRITICAL OF US CREDIT RESTRICTIONS BUT ACKNOWLEDGED SENATOR STEVENSON'S "GOOD INTENTIONS" AFTER LATTER HAD EXPLAINED INTENT OF STEVENSON AMENDMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. SENATOR ADLAI STEVENSON, III, ACCOMPANIED BY DAS LUERS, PROFESSOR JOHN LEWIS, CHARGE AND E/C COUNSELOR, CALLED ON GOSBANK DIRECTOR ALKHIMOV ON JANUARY 13 FOR 70 MINUTE DISCUSSION WHICH INCLUDED - AFTER DEBT ISSUE WAS RAISED - UNEXPECTEDLY VIGOROUS MONOLOGUE BY ALKHIMOV ON SHORTCOMINGS
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OF US POLICY. ALKHIMOV RESUMED DISCUSSION WITH SENATOR, LUERS AND COUNSELOR IN SOMEWHAT LESS CONTENTIOUS MOOD AT CHARGE'S LUNCHEON IN STEVENSON'S HONOR. AFTER SESSION SENATOR REMARKED THAT ON HIS 1971 VISIT HE HAD A SIMILARLY SHARP EXCHANGE OF VIEWS WITH ALKHIMOV THAT DAY'S DISCUSSION HAD RECALLED TO MIND. MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION ON MEETING IN STATE BANK, UNCLEARED BY SENATOR, WILL BE POUCHED. THIS MESSAGE INCORPORATES HIGHLIGHTS OF SESSION, INCLUDING LUNCHEON DISCUSSION.

2. SOVIET/EAST EUROPEAN DEBT. AFTER STEVENSON MENTIONED US CONCERN ABOUT SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN DEBT, ALKHIMOV LAUGHINGLY SUGGESTED US SHOULD WORRY MORE ABOUT ITS OWN TRADE DEFICIT AND DETERIORATING CURRENCY. ALTHOUGH HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT INCREASING EXPORTS IS A SERIOUS PROBLEM WHICH SOVIET INDUSTRY HAS TENDED TO IGNORE. ALKHIMOV CONTENDED THAT EXCEPT FOR GRAIN PURCHASES OF PAST FEW YEARS, SOVIET TRADE WITH WEST WOULD HAVE BEEN IN BALANCE AND OTHER GOODS COULD HAVE BEEN PURCHASED IN THEIR PLACE. SOVIET DEBT, WHICH FOR SAKE OF ARGUMENT HE ACCEPTED AS \$18 BILLION, WAS SMALL IN COMPARISON TO US INDEBTEDNESS IN 1914 AND NORMAL IN LIGHT OF THE USSR'S RESOURCES. CITING NATURAL

GAS AS EXAMPLE, ALKHIMOV SAID SOVIETS HAD INCURRED \$4-5 BILLION HARD CURRENCY INDEBTEDNESS FOR TURBINES AND OTHER EQUIPMENT BUT NOW EARNED ONE BILLION DOLLARS ANNUALLY FROM EXPORTS, WITH FIGURE DUE TO RISE FURTHER. DURING LUNCHEON CONVERSATION ALKHIMOV REJECTED NOTION THAT SOVIET OIL MIGHT NO LONGER PROVIDE SUBSTANTIAL EARNINGS, SUGGESTING THAT CIA PROGNOSIS HAD NOT BEEN INTENDED TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY.

3. US DOLLAR. RESPONDING TO LUERS' DIRECT QUESTION, ALKHIMOV SAID THAT SOVIETS KEPT MOST OF HARD CURRENCY HOLDINGS IN DEUTSCHMARKS (COMMENT: ALL THREE AMERICAN BANKS IN MOSCOW BELIEVE MOST SOVIET HOLDINGS ARE IN DOLLARS.) THEY WERE NEVERTHELESS CONCERNED ABOUT STABILITY OF THE DOLLAR, HE SAID, BECAUSE OF NEED FOR
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SETTLED TRADING CONDITIONS. HE EMPHASIZED NEED FOR A STRONG DOLLAR IN LIGHT OF ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE WORLD ECONOMY. IN DISCUSSING CURRENT WEAKNESS OF THE DOLLAR, HE APPEARED TO ALIGN HIMSELF MORE WITH ARTHUR BURNS THAN WITH WILLIAM MILLER SINCE FORMER, HE SAID, WAS "STUBBORN," A QUALITY HE CLEARLY ADMIRERED IN A CENTRAL BANKER. (ALKHIMOV ALSO MENTIONED THAT HE KNOWS AND RESPECTS MILLER AS WELL.) DEPRECIATION OF DOLLAR WOULD NOT BE HELPFUL TO US EXPORTS VIS-A-VIS JAPANESE AND WEST EUROPEANS, ALKHIMOV THOUGHT, SINCE SOVIET IMPORTERS ARE NOT

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SWIFT TO CHANGE THEIR PURCHASING HABITS. ALKHIMOV REACTED POSITIVELY TO SENATOR'S OPTIMISTIC FORECAST ABOUT ADOPTION BY CONGRESS OF PRESIDENT'S ENERGY PROGRAM.

4. US TRADE LEGISLATION, ASSURANCES AND INVESTMENTS. ALKHIMOV BRUSHED OFF AS "GOOD INTENTIONS" SENATOR'S EXPLANATION OF BACKGROUND OF STEVENSON AMENDMENT TO EXPORT-IMPORT BANK LEGISLATION AS A MEANS OF HEADING OFF JACKSON/VANIK TYPE LIMITATIONS. SENATOR STEVENSON SOUGHT TO SHOW THAT POLITICAL ACTIONS, SUCH AS SOVIET RESTRAINT IN MIDDLE EAST OR AFRICA, WOULD AFFECT
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CONGRESSIONAL THINKING ON TRADE LEGISLATION, ALKHIMOV AGREED THAT TWO COUNTRIES SHOULD SEEK BETTER RELATIONS BUT ARGUED THAT INVOLVING NON-ECONOMIC ISSUES IN TRADE WOULD MAKE A SOLUTION IMPOSSIBLE. THE USSR'S OWN STAKE IN SUCH INVESTMENT PROJECTS WAS SUBSTANTIAL, HE SAID. IT HAD INVESTED EQUIVALENT OF SEVEN BILLION DOLLARS IN ORENBURG TO SUPPLEMENT FOREIGN BORROWING OF SOME FOUR TO FIVE BILLION. IN CASE OF GERMAN AND FRENCH GAS IMPORTS, LETTERS OF SUPPORT HAD BEEN RECEIVED FROM THE CONCERNED WESTERN GOVERNMENTS. SUCH GOVERNMENT SUPPORT WAS NECESSARY IF THE USSR WAS TO INVEST ITS OWN BILLIONS. WITH REFERENCE TO YAKUTSK NATURAL GAS, WHY SHOULD THE SOVIETS INVEST FIVE TO TEN BILLION RUBLES IN THE PROJECT IN THE ABSENCE OF SUCH SUPPORT? EXPORT-IMPORT BANK FINANCING, THOUGH NOT COMPETITIVE IN INTEREST RATES, WOULD MANIFEST USG SUPPORT OF THIS PROJECT. (ALKHIMOV DID NOT MAKE CLEAR WHETHER HE FELT EXIM CREDITS WERE REQUIRED OR WHETHER THERE COULD BE SOME OTHER FORM OF USG "SUPPORT" WHICH SOVIETS WOULD FIND SATISFACTORY). ASKED BY LUERS WHETHER SUCH AN ASSURANCE WOULD SUFFICE, ALKHIMOV RESPONDED THAT THIS WOULD DEPEND ON ITS WORDING.

5. CEMA RELATIONS. DISCUSSING ENERGY PRICING REVOLUTION

WHICH HAD TURNED EAST EUROPEANS INTO "BIG DEBTORS" OF USSR, ALKHIMOV SAID THAT FORMER ARE NOW WORKING OUT FIVE YEAR PLANS FOR 1981-85 PERIOD. BY INCREASING THEIR EXPORTS TO USSR, HE SAID, THEY SHOULD BE ABLE TO BALANCE ACCOUNTS, BARRING SOME UNFORESEEN DEVELOPMENTS. ALKHIMOV SAID USSR SUPPLIES CREDIT TO EAST EUROPEANS FOR TEN TO FIFTEEN YEARS AT TWO PERCENT. HE DESCRIBED OIL SALES AT \$60 PER TON AS A BARGAIN FOR EAST EUROPEAN PURCHASING IN LIGHT OF CURRENT WORLD PRICES. ALKHIMOV CONTRASTED DEBT
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MANAGEMENT OF EAST EUROPEAN STATES, LATER FAVORABLY COMPARING CZECHOSLOVAK TIGHT REIN ON BORROWINGS FROM THE WEST WITH WHAT HE TERMED POLISH AND HUNGARIAN FINANCIAL INDISCIPLINE. (HE REFERRED TO SOVIETS' OWN "STRONG DISCIPLINE.") HE THOUGHT POLES ARE NOW DOING BETTER AFTER HAVING OVERBORROWED IN ATTEMPT TO INVEST TOO HEAVILY. "THEY WERE INVESTING A HIGHER PERCENTAGE THAN WE," HE EXPLAINED. IN REJECTING WITH SCORN IDEA USSR MIGHT RUN OUT OF OIL FOR EXPORT, ALKHIMOV ACKNOWLEDGED LIMITATIONS ON EXPORTS TO CEMA AREA BUT SAID EAST EUROPEANS USE TOO MUCH ENERGY. "THEY HAVE TOO MUCH GASOLINE," HE SAID AND COMMENTED WITHOUT EVIDENT PLEASURE ON THEIR HIGH LIVING STANDARDS. ALKHIMOV REJECTED THE NOTION THAT THE USSR HAS ANY LAST RESORT RESPONSIBILITY FOR POLISH DEBTS.

6. INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL ORGANIZATIONS. SENATOR STEVENSON SAID THAT MEMBERSHIP IN IMF AND WORLD BANK COULD BE HELPFUL TO EAST EUROPEANS IN OBTAINING CREDITS, AND SAID SOME EAST EUROPEANS APPEARED TO WISH TO MOVE IN THIS DIRECTION. HE HAD IMPRESSION USSR WAS OPPOSED TO JOINING AND WANTED TO SEE MORE INTRA-CEMA TRADE. HE ASKED IF THE USSR OPPOSED HAVING THE EAST EUROPEANS JOIN THESE ORGANIZATIONS. ALKHIMOV REPLIED THAT IT WAS UP TO THEM, ADDING THAT THE USSR DID NOT LIKE THE VOTING SYSTEM IN THOSE BODIES VERY MUCH, BUT NEW MEMBERSHIPS WERE CHANGING VOTING SITUATION. IT WAS TRUE THAT IMF MIGHT PROVIDE "DISCIPLINE" FOR POLES, HE THOUGHT. RECALLING THAT USSR HAD ALMOST JOINED IMF AT BRETTON WOODS, ALKHIMOV SAID THAT IT WAS "NOT SUCH A GREAT PROBLEM." "PERHAPS THE UNITED STATES WOULD GIVE THE SOVIET UNION CREDITS," HE SUGGESTED.

7. LOANS TO LDC'S. DURING DISCUSSION AT STATE BANK ALKHIMOV ASSERTED THAT SOVIETS HAD ADVANCED MORE MONEY IN CREDITS THAN THEY OWED IN DEBTS. OF COURSE, HE EXPLAINED, "WE DON'T GET IT ALL BACK FROM THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES,
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ANY MORE THAN THE US DOES." DURING LUNCHEON HE STATED THAT USSR LOANS TO LDC'S AT FOUR PERCENT PER ANNUM.

8. ORENBURG PIPELINE COMPLETION. ALKHIMOV STATED DURING MORNING DISCUSSION AND REITERATED FLATLY AT LUCH THAT ORENBURG PIPELINE WOULD BE COMPLETED ON SCHEDULE IN 1978.

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9. INTERNAL PRICES. ALKHIMOV ACKNOWLEDGED THAT LOW PRICE OF BASIC COMMODITIES SUCH AS BREAD AND HEATING GAS LED TO WASTEFUL USE. HE SAID THERE WAS CONTINUING DEBATE ON THIS SUBJECT IN SOVIET LEADERSHIP BUT DID NOT HINT AT ANY CHANGES. ACKNOWLEDGING THAT SOVIET CITIZENS HAVE SUBSTANTIAL SAINGS, HE SAW NO PROBLEM IN THIS AND ASSERTED THAT SAVINGS COULD BE DIRECTED TOWARDS ACQUISITION

OF AUTOMOBILES OR COUNTRY HOMES.

10. ASKED ABOUT SOVIET PLANS TO ESTABLISH A BANK IN
NEW YORK, ALKHIMOV SAID THIS WOULD DEPEND ON DEVELOPMENT
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IN BILATERAL RELATIONS.

11. AN INTERESTING ASPECT OF LUNCHEON CONVERSATION
CAME WHEN SENATOR STEVENSON RELATED HOW KHRUSCHEV HAD
SENT FORMER SOVIET AMBASSADOR MENSHIKOV TO HIS FATHER IN 1960
TO OFFER ASSISTANCE IN DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY. MENSHIKOV HAD TOLD THE
SENIOR STEVENSON THAT HE LEFT IT TO THE LATTER TO DECIDE HOW
THE HELP SHOULD BE GIVEN, BUT STEVENSON REJECTED THE
OFFER. BOTH ALKHIMOV AND FIRST DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER
KORNIYENKO SAID WITH OBVIOUS EMBARRASSMENT THEY HAD NEVER
HEARD OF SUCH AN OFFER.

12. COMMENT: SINCE ALKHIMOV ENJOYS REPUTATION FOR
BEING SOFT-SPOKEN AND DISPASSIONATE, HIS CONTENTIOUS TONE
STRUCK SENATOR STEVENSON AS ABRASIVE. HOWEVER, SOVIETS
REMAIN SENSITIVE ON SUBJECT OF THEIR INDEBTEDNESS, WHICH
ALKHIMOV IN PARTICULAR HAS SOUGHT WITH SOME SUCCESS THROUGH
HIS WELL ADVERTISED "DISCIPLINE" TO RESTRAIN. THE SENATOR'S
ATTEMPT TO EXPLAIN INTENT OF STEVENSON AMENDMENT SEEMED
TO MAKE LITTLE IMPACT, PROBABLY BECAUSE SOVIETS TRAIN THEIR
MAIN CRITICISM ON JACKSON/VANIK WHICH ABSOLUTELY PREVENTS
CREDITS. ALKHIMOV SHOWED LITTLE RECEPTIVITY TO UNPLEASANT
REALITY THAT ITS REPEAL COULD DEPEND ON POLITICAL FACTORS
SUCH AS SOVIET BEHAVIOR.

13. ALKHIMOV'S COMMENTS ON EAST EUROPEANS AS "BIG
DEBTORS" OF USSR WHO HAVE TOO MUCH GASOLINE AND USE TOO
MUCH ENERGY IS CLEARLY REFLECTIVE OF THE THINKING OF MANY
SOVIET LEADERS. SYMPATHY FOR THEIR "SOCIALIST" BRETHREN
IS PROBABLY NOT TOO DEEP, ESPECIALLY FOR THOSE THEY FEEL
HAVE OVERBORROWED IN THE PROCESS.
ON THE OTHER HAND, ALKHIMOV'S COMMENTS ON IMF MEMBERSHIP FOR
EAST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, HIS VARIOUS FAVORABLE REFERENCES TO
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"DISCIPLINE" AND HIS COMMENTS ABOUT POSSIBLE CHANGING NATURE
OF IMF VOTING PATTERN WERE DECIDEDLY MORE POSITIVE THAN THE
STANDARD SOVIET LINE ON THESE MATTERS. IN THE SOVIET
ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE ALKHIMOV SEEMS
CLEARLY TO BELONG IN THE CAMP OF THE ENLIGHTENED.

NEVERTHELESS, THE OVERRIDING SOVIET OBJECTIVE IS TO KEEP THE BRETHREN ON SHORT LEASHES. THAT IS REFLECTED IN THE GOAL OF INCREASING THE SHARE OF INTERNAL CEMA TRADE, IN TOTAL TRADE, EVEN THOUGH THE USSR STILL PROJECTS A SMALLER INCREASE IN EAST/WEST TRADE. THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP, WE THINK, WILL CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN A STRONG SUSPICION ABOUT ANY ASSOCIATIONS WHICH MIGHT RUN COUNTER TO THEIR OBJECTIVE OF A COHESIVE REGIONAL ECONOMIC GROUP. THIS WHILE IT IS "UP TO THE EAST EUROPEANS," AS LAKHIMOV SAID, TO DECIDE WHETHER TO JOIN THE IMF, THE SOVIETS WILL CERTAINLY WISH TO GIVE THEIR "ADVICE," AND IT IS UNLIKELY TO BE FAVORABLE.
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